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Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America

a statement and recommendations
on the present racial crisis.

FEDERAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES
OF CHRIST IN AMERICA
PUBLICITY SERVICE
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CHURCH COUNCIL CALLS FOR JUSTICE TO THE NEGRO

THE PROBLEM NO LONGER SECTIONAL

COOPERATION AND RACIAL UNDERSTANDING NECESSARY

A call to the citizens of the United States to act in conformity with the high ideals of democracy and of Christianity in the present condition of strained relations between the races has just been issued by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, acting in conjunction with a large representative committee of white and colored citizens from all sections of the country. This committee met recently in New York City on the call of the secretary of the Home Missions Council and the chairman of the Committee of the Federal Council on Negro Churches. Much time was given to a full and free discussion of the racial situation. As a result this address was issued which represents the thought of these leaders and the deliberative judgment of the Administrative Committee of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.

A STATEMENT AND RECOMMEMDATIONS

ON THE PRESENT RACIAL CRISIS.

The recent race conflicts in some of our cities challenge the attention of the Churches of Jesus Christ to their responsibility respecting an amicable and fair adjustment of race relations in America.

In the fellowship of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America are included 3,989,852 members of the Negro churches. In speaking therefore at this time for humanity and justice we voice the mind and conscience of both races. The present situation is a challenge to the Churches charged with the promotion of the brotherhood of man, which look upon all men as entitled to a footing of equality of opportunity. This calls for preaching the duty of economic and community justice for the Negro, thus securing peace and goodwill between the races. Beyond all else the present situation calls for confession on the part of Christian men and women of failure to live up to the standard of universal brotherhood as taught by Jesus Christ.

In the adjustment of race relations our country has in this crisis not only its own conscience to satisfy, but also to justify itself as a nation before the enlightened opinion of mankind. As a foremost exponent of the ideals of democratic government, the United States has been lifted to the full view of the world. Our present settlement therefore of race relations will influence in a very large measure the settlement of race relations in other parts of the world.

We must face frankly the fact that a most dangerous inter-racial situation now threatens our country. The problems growing out of the presence of two races in America are clearly seen to be nation-wide and the

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adjustments must necessarily be made on the basis of national responsibility. The migration of thousands of Negroes to the North emphasizes this fact. The outbreaks in several cities and the persistence of the anarchy and treason of lynch-law imperil our democracy.

The actual practice of the principles of the brotherhood of Christ can prevent such conflicts and nothing else will. The Church must offer the ideals, the program and the leadership in this crisis. The Church must meet its obligation, or leadership will pass not only to secular agencies, economic or socialistic, but to forces that are destructive of civilization.

We must confess that the Church and its ministry as related to the welfare of the Negro has been too little inspired by the fundamental principles and ideals of Jesus Christ. Communities that have expressed horror over atrocities abroad, have seen, almost unmoved and silent, men beaten, hanged and also burned by the mob.

The Negro has ever shown profound faith in God and has always looked to the Church for leadership, for counsel and for guidance. The Church which for fifty years has a record of almost unmatched service in the education and betterment of the race will now be recreant to her trust and lose her birth-right of service if she does not meet this confidence with a full sense of responsibility and a full measure of service for justice, peace and goodwill. To this end we therefore urge upon the Church, her ministry and membership this constructive program:

A CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAM FOR JUST INTER-RACIAL RELATIONS

1. The Government, local, state and national, should impartially guarantee to all classes security of life and of property. Mob violence is becoming a crowd habit. When life and property are ruthlessly taken, when men and women are lynched with no protection from officers or courts, law and

order are trampled under foot. We call upon the pulpit, the press and all good people to create a public sentiment that will support necessary legislation for the enforcement of existing laws, that life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness may be equally assured to all classes.

2. The Negro should have economic justice, equal opportunity to get and hold work on the same terms as other men, with equal pay for equal work, and with fair working and living conditions. The entrance of large numbers of Negroes into the various industries emphasizes the necessity of an immediate amicable adjustment of relations with white employers and fellow-workers.

3. We call upon men and women everywhere to protect the sanctity of home and womanhood. We record with satisfaction the growing enlistment of Negro leaders in a program of education and Christianization such as tends to prevent crimes that provoke mob violence. The home of the Negro should receive the same measure of respect and protection as that of other Americans, and the sanctity of his home relations should be safeguarded in every possible way. Swift and impartial action of the law should strike the violator of the sanctity of any home, white or black.

4. We recognize as fundamental to the welfare and efficiency of society that adequate recreational provisions be made available for Negro citizens.

5. We strongly endorse the plea of the Negro for equal traveling accommodations for equal charges.

6. Adequate educational facilities for Negro children and youth should be provided not only as a national obligation but also as a necessity for national welfare. We emphasize the urgency of giving to the Negro his full share of local and national funds.

7. Qualifications for franchise should be administered irrespective of race, creed or color.

8. Closer cooperation between the races should be promoted by organizing local committees of white and colored people in towns and communities for the consideration of inter-racial welfare. All possible agencies should be enlisted in fostering a spirit of justice and of goodwill in the relations of one race to the other. We recommend that the governor of each state appoint a standing committee for the careful study of the causes underlying race friction with a view to their removal and that Congress be requested through a non-partisan committee to investigate the disturbed and threatening inter-racial situation throughout the nation.

Racial understanding and cooperation furnish the only sure basis of race adjustment in a democracy. The root of the matter is the failure to recognize the Negro as a man. The basis of distress on both sides is fear, and "fear hath torment". Respect for Negro manhood and womanhood is the only basis for amicable race adjustment, for race integrity and for permanent racial peace. If we talk democracy, let us act domocracy. If we propose a democratic program for the protection and self-determination of the weak and oppressed people of Europe as a means of permanent peace and goodwill abroad, let us apply the same program at home.

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Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America

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